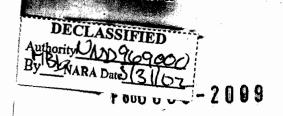
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COMMENT: Obviously the GOI still considers it essential, in order to eliminate the heavy illicit importation of opium into Iran. to pursue vigorously its two-pronged program of strict anti-smuggling controls and of controlled provision of home-grown opium for incurrable Iranian addicts and those under treatment. As previously reported, there is evidence that the program has begun to affect smuggling. There seems little prospect that Iran will consider restricting or eliminating poppy cultivation before seeing persuasive evidence of poppy elimination and control in Turkey and perhaps even Afghanistan. However the Shah's comments that production will continue in order to meet "local needs" may indicate that the GOI has abandoned its earlier notion of producing for export. Opium production to date has been low and costs of production have far exceeded world market prices; perhaps the hard reality that Iran simply cannot compete profitably in the declining world market has finally been recognized. Collection of the 1970 opium crop is now in its final stages, but the Embassy has no estimate yet of the total quantity produced or even of the number of hectares actually cultivated out of the 6.200 hectares previously authorized for planting.

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